



State of Louisiana

Department of Health and Hospitals

Office of the Secretary

Returning Home After a Flood

Residents of flood-affected areas are encouraged to follow the guidance below when returning to their homes.

- If you have evacuated, do not try to return home until you get official information that floodwaters have receded and that roads are passable.
- Assume all power lines are carrying electricity even if residences and businesses in the area do not have power.
- Intersections with traffic lights that are not operating should be considered four-way stops.
- Avoid floodwaters. Floodwater may contain sewage or chemical contaminants. Snakes and balls of fire ants are likely to be in the water. Water may also contain other unseen hazards such as live electrical wires or sharp objects.
- You may encounter wild animals trying to find higher ground. Never try to touch a wild animal. If one has entered your home, avoid contact with it and call your local wildlife authority for guidance or assistance.
- Avoid using matches or lighters until you are sure no natural gas leaks have occurred.
- Fully document damage to your property with a camera or video camera for insurance purposes before repairs begin.
- If your home flooded, make sure it is thoroughly cleaned before moving in again. Dangers such as mold, air contaminants, electrical shorts and unstable walls may be present in recently flooded homes.
- Throw out any foods, including canned goods, that came into contact with floodwater. If your home lost power, you may need to throw out food that spoiled in your refrigerator as well.
- If you have a septic tank, it may have been affected by the flooding. Do not use the sewage system until water in the soil absorption field is lower than the water level around the house. Have your septic tank professionally inspected and serviced if you suspect damage. More guidance is available at the link to the EPA's website below.
<http://water.epa.gov/drink/emmerprep/flood/septicsystems.cfm>
- Consider hiring licensed professionals to inspect your home and either make repairs or advise you on how to do the work. This includes specialists for gas and water plumbing, electrical work, drywall and mold removal.